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Pastor Emeritus of the Central Church, Worcester, Mass.

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Reprinted from the "Southern Workman"

Hampton Institute Press
1906

ARMSTRONG, THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

An address delivered in Memorial Church, Hampton Institute, by Rev. Daniel Merriman, D.D., pastor emeritus of the Central Church, Worcester, Massachusetts, on Founder's Day, February fourth, nineteen hundred and six.

IT is a rare privilege to be able to address you on this day of happy memories. I am especially glad of the opportunity to add, if I may, even one leaf to the chaplet of laurel that crowns the head of my old friend and college mate, the Founder of Hampton. Not that he needs, or desired, any eulogy. On the contrary he particularly disliked, and even forbade it; and no one can stand here and not be sensible of his presence and protest. Yet there is a sense in which his eulogy is inevitable. The very stones here are eloquent in his behalf. Moroever to speak well of him is only the natural reflection in us of his influence over us. This is the meaning of this pertinent exhortation in a very old book: "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. The Lord manifested in them great glory, even His mighty power from the beginning."

Such praise worthily bestowed is a most helpful exercise for those who sincerely engage in it. It has been said that the friendship of a great man is a liberal education. Those who were fortunate enough to come in personal contact with General Armstrong here, received this impress. But next to such friendship with the great who are living is the sympathetic admiration, the exaltation daily before us, as models, of the image, the character, the example of the great who are dead. They can speak to us with a most penetrating and persuasive voice. What they have been they inspire us to be. Where they have trod they encourage us to follow. Of our sins and failures they convict us. The works that they have wrought, the victories that they have gained, the characters and influence that they have achieved, they, from their silent graves, urge us to make our own. "Let us now praise famous men." We never—especially young people—never make a mistake in thus constantly holding before us these shining, uplifting heroes of the past.

In this respect, beyond all its other great advantages, Hampton is peculiarly fortunate. Historically and geographically this is a most admirable situation. Here are noble buildings and excellent apparatus, the cumulative product of many hands, much thought, much sacrifice. But your richest endowment is the personality of your great Founder. You do well year by year especially to commemorate his birthday. Here, enshrined in these buildings yet moving like some persuasive presence through these grounds; standing in your halls, your doorways, your gates, yet also hallowing the atmosphere with his influence, is the dominating spirit of him of whom all this is the embodiment, and who has quickened, quickens now, and must forever quicken to nobler

living, every youth who can know Hampton. I can never stand by his lowly grave over yonder without being profoundly moved. "He being dead yet speaketh." Dull indeed must be the ears of that young man or woman whom the eloquence of that devoted life does not at once convict of imperfection and inspire to duty. Yes, though we are aware of his austere protest against all extravagance of speaking, we do well indeed to recall with gratitude on this day the memory of Hampton's Founder.

It was my great good fortune to know General Armstrong as a fellow student when he first entered Williams College more than forty-five years ago. As a college mate I was familiar with his life and development there. When the flame of the Civil War burst forth and he entered the army I followed his career. Later, as he began his service for the Freedmen's Bureau and laid the first foundations of Hampton, his work enlisted my cordial sympathy. Exactly thirty-six years ago this month I came here at his request to preach and administer the Lord's Supper to the little church that he had gathered Then the first of your permanent buildings—Academic Hall—was only partly finished and the place of meeting was one of the old barracks As one looks about here now and contrasts that day with this, one may well exclaim, "What hath God wrought!"

For many years thereafter, during the long course of his strenuous life, he was a frequent guest at my house, often spoke in my church, accompanied me on various excursions, and with his passionate eagerness brought me here, talked of his work, and claimed my sympathy and coöperation. Was there ever such a flaming soul? Was there ever such a many-sided figure? So "rich in saving common sense," yet so poetic and mystical; so iron-like and inflexible in his purpose, yet so open-minded to all suggestion, and so boyish and frolicsome in his love of fun; so clear-headed and definite in "hugging his fact," as Emerson says, yet so imaginative, prophetic, and far-reaching in his schemes; so ample in his knowledge of the base and seamy side of human nature, yet so abounding in his enthusiasm for humanity; so shrewd in planning and in securing the help of others, yet so trustful and care free in the confidence that the work would be done.

Hard indeed had been the fate of the African for two hundred and fifty years on this continent. Scarcely less hard had been the fate of the Indian since the white man had touched him. But though He waits, the Lord knows how to compensate His children. He plans to secure their good in unlooked-for ways. For both oppressed races He took thought when He caused the little babe, Samuel Chapman Armstrong, to be born on a lone island of the Pacific and trained by marvelous experiences for immortal service here on this spot. You and all the millions of your brethren have cause for the profoundest gratitude to God for His gift to you and your people of this true hero and saint, this compelling knight and apostle of your better day, to be forever set

like a star in your brightening firmament as your guide, example, and inspiration.

Such a character as that of General Armstrong must be taken as a whole. In one aspect he was a most complex, in another a most simple being. Personality is like life—always in the end a mystery defying analysis. We never quite understand what it is that makes a great man and gives him his preëminent power. His secret is inscrutable. He speaks to us. He sits at our table, chatting and laughing like a child. He plans. For years he labors. He strikes his trenchant blow. Then he passes from us into the land of the hereafter, and we only know that a mighty spirit has been with us. So it was with General Armstrong.

Yet if we suffer ourselves for a moment to inquire into some of the sources of this man's influence over us, and over his own and coming generations, we cannot fail to be impressed first of all with his missionary spirit— in other words, the spirit of Christ that was in him. He was the child of missionary parents and was born on missionary ground. Zeal to help the poor, the ignorant, the darkened, the oppressed, was like a fire in his bones. The impulse to their relief was not so much his purpose as it was his life. He delighted in getting at and giving his hand to the downmost people. They interested and absorbed him. To him they were peculiarly God's children; and he forgot himself, forgot even his shelter, his food, his clothes, in planning for their aid, in pleading their cause, in enlisting the best forces of society on their behalf. They were as his other self. He bore them and their interests on his heart with unfaltering patience, and wisdom, and devotion.

Yet there was in him not an atom of the morbid sentimentality, the parade of self-sacrifice, the martyr-like, too-good-for-this-world quality which is sometimes popularly associated with the term "missionary." It seemed absurd to apply this title to him. For while he was desperately in earnest, he cherished no illusions about himself, or his work, or the objects of it. He was always sane. He lived in no fool's paradise. He saw, and often keenly enjoyed, the ludicrous side of the people and the problems with which he had to deal. Yet so absorbed was he in his great enterprise—so much was it his life—that he never thought of it as involving any special hardship on his part; and in those touching Memoranda which he left he said with the utmost simplicity, "I never gave up or sacrificed anything in my life." Still he was all the while giving his very life for this institution and the people for whom he founded it, and he died a prematurely old man, long before his time, worn out with toil and care.

He had plenty of imagination, he was almost a mystic; yet the hard-headed shrewdness with which he always recognized and stuck to the facts of a situation led him to discern, when no one else thought of it, and, in the face of others' doubts, resolutely to provide for the freed-

man's need, first of all, of being trained to work. Here he had the insight of genius, mingled with the fervor and faith of the missionary.

By work of the hand to educate the head and the heart; by keeping the feet solidly on the earth and making the hands realize the primal necessity of getting bread for the mouth and decent shelter and clothes for the body—by this very process to rid a man of laziness, vice, mischievous conceits, malice, race jealousies, bitterness, and all the unsocial traits, and to create in him self-respect, a desire for usefulness and entrance upon the largest opportunity—how simple it all seems now! But it was far from that in 1865. Then industrial training as an adjunct of education was deemed a failure. The Negroes for the most part thought that freedom from slavery meant freedom from work. Armstrong saw that work, intelligently directed work, leading to economic, social, and moral progress, was their salvation, as it was also the salvation of the Indian, and for that matter, of the white man too, and he stuck to his conviction. He determined to train all the young men and women he could by this means and then send them forth to their people to be themselves at once examples and teachers of the same principle. Behold the changes wrought in forty years!

Hampton and the Hampton idea have set the pace for the rest of the country. Industrial schools for the Negro dot the South, and for the Indian, the West. They are established and maintained by the money of almost every Southern state. They have the cordial support of both whites and blacks, who find here a point of union. Tuskegee, the largest and most successful institution in the world managed by Negro people for Negro people, and Booker Washington, the foremost Negro in the world, are children of Hampton, which has thus put its inspiring influence upon every part of the South.

Not only so, but through this revelation of the meaning of work as a factor of education the Southern white people have been led to see the value of industrial education for themselves and their children, and to establish similar institutions in their own behalf. Moreover, the success of the experiment, if experiment it may be called, has been reflected upon educational institutions at the North, bringing them into closer and more helpful contact with the realities of their problem.

When we consider the amazing economic, social, intellectual, and moral progress which your race has made in forty years; when we note the better relations which, in spite of all drawbacks, are slowly but surely coming about between the two races—the mutual respect, the willingness to coöperate in practical matters—we cannot doubt that a large part of this great gain is directly due to the influence of the Hampton idea, and we thank God to-day for the keen brain, the fervent heart, the resolute will of the heroic man who on this spot conceived and wrought out this idea.

At the beginning many feared and perhaps a few may still feel that this gospel of work was intended to keep the Negro down, in a class by himself as a hewer of wood and drawer of water, shut out from opportunity to rise. On the contrary that gospel has proved for thousands and hundreds of thousands of your people the ready, firm stepping-stone upon which they have been able to lift themselves out of poverty, squalor, ignorance, self-contempt, and the contempt of others, into thrift, decency, industry, intelligence, leadership, and a self-supporting, self-respecting, clean manhood and womanhood able to enter the door of the highest opportunity.

For we must always remember that, while with missionary ardor evolving and putting in operation here and elsewhere this wholesome gospel of work, General Armstrong never forgot for an instant the supreme value of intelligence and character. Indeed, that was his goal. No fiery evangelist, no ordained preacher of righteousness ever magnified this point more than he. Only, his Scotch-Irish and New England ancestry and his boyhood's experience on missionary ground had taught the value of the discipline of "doing chores," of hard work as the vehicle, the method, of achieving character. He remembered too that when the Almighty created Adam in His own image to live His life He put him "in a garden to dress and keep it." And Armstrong believed that no man could begin in a better place or start with a better business.

There is another trait of General Armstrong of which I should like to speak. Like many men of dominant personality he had the spirit of a soldier. He had himself the martial figure and loved the precision of military movements and the sound of the bugle. The Civil War found him a boyish, gay-hearted college student. Under its stern discipline and sacrifice he developed into a man. In it he learned the advantage of thoroughness, obedience, strict organization, and the dutiful subordination of a multitude of parts to one whole.

Many of the noblest qualities of the true soldier are simply the virtues of the true citizen carried to their highest power. The courage; the contempt of ease; the patriotism brought to the practical test of instant readiness to suffer wounds and death; the exaltation of the mass at the unquestioning cost of the individual; the mingled humility respecting oneself and pride in the organization to which one belongs; the patient, steady attention to a thousand details of drudgery in order to meet successfully the great event, the sublime and sudden issue—all these are a part of the lessons of the genuine soldier. Through these lessons General Armstrong received much of his development. He loved this stern discipline. His soul fervently responded to it. It enlarged, chastened, and exalted some of the finest attributes of the man, and profoundly and helpfully affected his whole later career.

Moreover, his command of a regiment of Negro troops enabled

him, with that quenchless curiosity and enthusiasm for everything human which was one of his most notable traits, to understand the Negro character, and know how to get at and in the best way help the Negro man. He never ceased his fondness for this study. At the close of the war there was hardly a man at the North who knew the race, its needs and possibilities, more perfectly than he.

I have heard him tell with kindling eye, not unmixed with a rollicking humor, how a colonel should be the father of his regiment, and how he had learned to care for, nurse, discipline, inspire, and rally to almost superhuman exertions the individuals and whole body of his men. I remember when I visited him here as early as 1870, watching him with the keenest interest going along the ranks of the students drawn up in military order for inspection. It was a thrilling sight. The spirit of the most serious and chivalrous manhood seemed to breathe out from the touch and presence of this knightly Christian upon these ex-slave boys to transform them into men. It was education by impression. It was a kind of transference of personality by the mere sight of and movement of a great figure. Thus the love of martial music, of martial discipline, and the inspiration, the subtle worth and influence of these things in giving to the slovenly but slowly rising race precision, orderliness, rectitude, physical and moral, subordination of the individual, and sense of the whole, went out from the Soldier Armstrong to Hampton as one of its earliest beneficent and fixed traditions, and from Hampton to Tuskegee and hundreds of similar schools throughout the South. It was the soldier spirit which your great Founder brought with him out of the flame of the Civil War—the spirit of the Christian soldier. It was no wonder that he closed those remarkable Memoranda, which are household words at Hampton, with the military utterance, "Taps has just sounded," and that in those same Memoranda he desired for himself the austere and thrilling simplicity of a "soldier's funeral."

There is another characteristic of General Armstrong which should not pass without notice. It is his deep spirituality. So intensely human was he; so devoted to work and to the practical side of his vast enterprise; so abounding and so unconventional was he in his love of a good joke and in his disposition to make fun; so absolutely averse was he to talking about any religious experience of his own, that few people realized how profound was his spiritual nature and feeling, and from what depths of daily communion with his God he drew the inspiration which sustained him. He walked with God. Prayer was his vital breath. His heart was always open to the higher suggestions of the spirit. This is largely the secret of his ability to brave the strain of his work and to influence others to share it. It gave him that air of detachment, of being assured that a Hand stronger and wiser than his own was sustaining him, which was one source of his power. No man was ever more absorbed in his work, yet more outside and above it.

The lessons of General Armstrong's life have often been emphasized here and elsewhere; yet they need to be impressed year by year upon every student and every class in this school, upon every generation of your people, and indeed upon all our countrymen. As I have already said, his life and personality are built into the very fabric of this institution. His spirit permeates it. No one can spend any time at Hampton, or come in contact with anyone who has ever been a faithful student or teacher here, without in some degree coming under the influence of this extraordinary life, this uplifting personality. Its lessons are in the air, so to speak. Yet perhaps we should not use to the full the opportunity of this Memorial Day did we not refresh our minds with two or three of the most important of these lessons.

Foremost among them is the assurance we have of the reality of the Divine Providence—"that every man's life is," as Dr. Bushnell said, "a plan of God"—and that we can rest in the wisdom of this Divine Providence, not only in respect to our own lives but in respect to the institutions, the generations, and the race of which we are a part.

Recall for a moment the oft-told and amazing story. It is seventy-five years ago and a strong young missionary and his bride from New England are on their way to teach the savages of the Sandwich Islands. To human view what a hopeless enterprise! There seven years later their little son, Samuel, is born. The boy grows up to young manhood under the careful eye of father and mother, but living the free, joyous life of the island people in the midst of the most inspiring scenery of mountain and sea. He learns to work. He learns the conditions of the poor savages. He becomes familiar with the school established for their industrial training. He himself, strong, independent, daring, full of passion, tenderness, and trust, is then transferred to Williams College in western Massachusetts—a great change. I well remember his amazement at his first sight of the snow. Then he comes under the influence of that prince of teachers, President Mark Hopkins. Eagerly absorbing all the most inspiring advantages of college days, his noble nature expands like a flower. Then at twenty-four, the fiery current of the Civil War finds him. It is primarily on behalf of the slave that he flings himself into that current. The wearisome drudgery of the camp, the heart-breaking march, the sudden onset, the humiliation of defeat and surrender, the deferring of hope, the exposure, the loneliness, the hunger, the headlong courage at Gettysburg when as captain he stands amidst the carnage almost alone among the officers of his command—what a discipline, what a tempering of his fine steel is all this! Then moving up from captain to major and lieutenant colonel, he at last becomes full colonel of a regiment of ex-slaves. In these he takes the utmost pride. These he trains, watches over, steadies, and leads with passionate ardor and dauntless courage down to the very end of the war and beyond. Then, moved by

his unconquerable sympathy for the black people in their ignorance, poverty, and helplessness, we find him on this spot at twenty-seven, at the very top of his splendid manhood, to begin laying with wonderful insight and faith the foundations of this school. What a wonderful story! Can anyone trace it and not believe in God? Not believe in an overruling Providence?

But the tremendous lesson for each one of us is that every one of our lives, however insignificant it may seem, is intended in like manner to reveal God's Providence and is just as much under His care. Not on the same scale—General Armstrong was right when he said, "Few men have the chance that I have had"—not on the same scale, but with equal reality. Be sure that God has a plan for you and your race. Not without a purpose did he cause you to be born and brought up, hindered here and helped there as you have been so far. Though your life may thus far have seemed to be very petty and wretched, mean and narrow in its outlook, full of poverty, darkness, limitation, yet know this, that God is in it. Even its hardships and obstacles are ordered by His hand. Be sure that if you trust Him He has a place, a work, an influence, not so great, not so glorious, it may be, as General Armstrong's but not the less beautiful, not the less God's plan.

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime."

You may sometimes think, perhaps some of you may be thinking to-day, "I am shut up by poverty or lack of friends, and there is no way out for me. I am at the end of my rope, I have nothing and can do and be nothing forever more, amen." But God is near you, nevertheless, and is planning for you at just such times. *Only*—and this is the second supreme lesson for us all from General Armstrong's life—*only*, God never helps those who do not help themselves. He expects every one of us to do his utmost duty at every step; to be ready, even in the darkest hour, to do the very next honest thing, be it ever so little, so hard, so menial. The lazy man, the man who, because life looks at the moment a little dark, or burdened, or trying, or because the immediate thing that he is asked to do seems beneath his dignity—this sort of man Nature herself will spue out of her mouth at last as a worthless, nauseating thing, and he will find himself in the rubbish heap, forsaken of gods and men. Nobody wants him.

We look back to-day over General Armstrong's marvelous career and it seems as straight and as clear, as beautiful and radiant from beginning to end as a ray of sunlight coming forth from the very bosom of God. But there were many hard places and difficult, perplexing crises in that life. In college he struggled over the question whether he should enter the ministry. After the war, he was for a time out of employment and hesitated whether he should study a profession, go into business, seek a government position, or to try to enter Congress.

He had his hours of anxiety. But at each one of the crises, as well as the crises in the history of this school, when the way seemed dark or hedged up he resolutely and with faith did the duty that lay next his hand, and duty pointed the shining way; duty revealed the divine plan. The action of the man was the revelation of God.

This seems to me one of the deepest lessons of General Armstrong's life for you. He himself was never tired of enforcing it. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." If it is blacking boots, black them so cheerfully and so well that they shall prove your capacity for greater tasks. The divine pathway to the largest opens from the smallest things.

Your great Founder was himself a most conspicuous illustration of this simple principle. Let all complaining, despondent, stagnating souls take heart from his example.

Here I must leave this fascinating theme. But let me say to you, young men and women, how great your opportunities are here. There is no place like this. Here you are the select beneficiaries of a great tradition, of a most inspiring life. Fail not to do your utmost. I feel here still the uplifting throb of the knightly, duty-loving, heroic presence of my old and beloved friend—lover of God, lover of you. His flashing eye seems still on us. His ringing, impetuous voice seems still ringing in our ears. Be worthy of all that he has done for you. Be equal to his great expectations for you.